

Satirical Medals of Napoleon the Miserable

Napoleon III, affectionately known as the Vampire of France

- A nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, he got himself elected president of France in 1848
- Found himself trapped by a constitutional clause limiting the office to a single four-year term
- In July 1851, a constitutional amendment to enable two successive terms failed to secure the necessary three quarters majority in the National Assembly
- Undeterred, he conducts a coup d' état on December 2nd, 1851, declaring himself emperor
- In May 1870, a plebiscite passed that appeared to secure his reign and succession, however his fortunes were about to take a decidedly nasty turn

Precipice for War

- The Spanish throne had sat empty since 1868 and Spanish authorities decided on Prince Leopold of Prussia, a Catholic and a relative of the Prussian king to fill the vacancy
- When acceptance of the offer became public in early July 1870, the French objected
- The offer was officially withdrawn on July 12th, 1870 after King William of Prussia met with the French ambassador
- William sends correspondence to his chancellor describing the tone and substance of his meeting
- The chancellor publishes an edited version insinuating the meeting did not go well
- This angers the French who declare and then mobilize for war

The Die is Cast

- Events did not materialize as Napoleon had planned
- The Germans efficiently deliver 380,000 men to the front while the French army arrives late
- In the test of strength, French forces are routed from the field
- Napoleon leaves Paris to rally his troops and runs into Germans everywhere
- He is forced to seek sanctuary in the fortress at Sedan surrendering on September 2nd, 1870.
- Napoleon and around 80,000 French soldiers are taken prisoner

Popular Sentiment

- The most universal way of expressing contempt for a ruler is to deface their coinage
- The practice on coins of Napoleon III set a record that has never been matched
- It is believed to have started in Alsace where silver five-franc pieces began appearing with the word "SEDAN" stamped across the head or neck of the emperor
- The most widespread practice became carving a German helmet or Pickelhaube onto the portrait.
- The medium quickly moved to the copper 10 Centimes coin as the working surface was larger
- Medalists rushed to fulfill the public appetite for such souvenirs

Pickelhaube or Vampire medals

- There are six designs which feature a version of Napoleon in a German helmet
- Only sporadic numismatic works have been published on the subject over the last 150 years
- The most inclusive reference in English is series of articles in *The Numismatist*, by Richard Dickerson and W.G. Schulze
- In 2016, "History of Satirical Coins" written by Christian Schweyer was published in French
- This work goes into much more detail providing fresh information
- This presentation will reference both sources, however it will follow Schweyer's timeline of issue

"Cannon & Lightning" Design

- Schweyer Type "A;" Dickerson/Schulze Type "D"
- Probably designed by Auguste Brichaut and engraved by either Charles Wurden or Adrien Veyrat
- Diameter is 28mm modeled after the 2 Franc coin
- Orientation is medal alignment
- Single obverse with two similar reverses for two varieties
- Believed to be the very first wave of monetary medals based on two defects
 - Where the chin strap rests and that it connects to the helmet on the inside
 - The angle shows it running over the ear instead of in front of it
 - These defects are not seen on later designs
- A 2nd reverse die was rushed into service after the first failed cracking in a spectacular fashion
 - Probably as to not disrupt supply while the fashion was in full swing
 - To maintain market share in competition with the next type

"Cannon and Crossbones" Design

- Schweyer Type "B;" Dickerson/Schulze Type "E"
- Designer/engraver unknown, however theorized to be from around the same time
- Diameter is 25mm modeled after the 5 Centimes coin
- Orientation is medal alignment
- Three obverses and three reverses identified resulting in four varieties
- First die displays the same helmet defects of the previous type
- The next two maintain the strap position adding the connection to the outside of the helmet
- The reverse designs are all similar with only variations in the lettering of the bottom inscriptions

“Brichaut”

- Schweyer Type “C;” Dickerson/Schulze Type “A”
- Credited to Auguste Brichaut with Charles Wurden or Adrien Veyrat as engravers
- Distinguished by 2 features:
 - Most realistic depiction of a German helmet of any medal
 - The owl is a feather for feather copy of the eagle on authentic French 10 centime coins down to tail feathers below the thunderbolt
- Diameter measures 32 mm
- Orientation is coin aligned for 7 varieties, medal alignment for the 8th and rarest one
- Six obverses and three reverses resulting in eight combinations or varieties
- Dickerson/Schulze cataloged the obverses by similarity
- Schweyer relies on a chart published in an article from November 1871
- He constructs the emission sequence for the six obverses as such:
 - C1a or O1-R1 debuts first
 - It is followed by C2a or O4-R1
 - Replacement of the reverse die leads to C2b or O4-R2
 - C3b or O3-R2 makes its entrance onto the scene
 - C4b or O2-R2 might be a replacement for C1a or O1-R1
 - C2 obverse fails leading to C5b or O5-R2
 - C6b or O6-R2 becomes the next design issued
 - The reverse die fails and is replaced by a similar one resulting in C6c or O6-R3
 - The last is the extremely rare combination C5c or O5-R3
- The sequence stops as the public appetite appears to have waned

“Cannon”

- Schweyer Type “E”; Dickerson/Schulze Type “C”
- Schweyer lists the designer as Dusseaux with Charles Troitin as the engraver
- Diameter measure 28mm modeled after the 2-franc coin
- Orientation is medal aligned
- Three obverses and two reverses for a total of four varieties
- Obverse dies best identified by the inscription spacers
 - E1 or O1: large 5-pointed stars
 - E2 or O2: small 5-pointed stars
 - E3 or O3: quatrefoils (4-petal flower in a circle)
- Two reverses best identified by the owl type
 - Reverse “a” or R1: referred to as an erect owl, paired with E1/O1 and E2/O2
 - Reverse “b” or R2: referred to as a hunched owl, paired with E2/O2 and E3/O3
- There is an extremely rare variety, E1b, unknown to Dickerson/Schulze

“Skull and Crossbones”

- Schweyer Type “F;” Dickerson/Schulze Type “B”
- Designer: Massonnet with Charles Troitin as the engraver
- Diameter measures 34mm
- Orientation is medal alignment
- Two obverses and two reverses making for three marriages
- Uses skulls, crossbones and blood droplets as inscription spacers.
- Schweyer deduces the following emission order:
 - F1a (Dickerson/Schulze O1-R1) appears first with all known examples showing a reverse die crack from the owl’s leg to its head
 - When the reverse die finally fails, it is replaced to strike F1b (Dickerson/Schulze O1-R2)
 - The owl on this reverse looks suspiciously like Napoleon
 - This combination continues until the obverse develops a fatal crack from the LE across the bust to the E in DEC
 - It is replaced by F2 or O2 striking only a few copies as this issue comes near the end of the fad and is a rare variety

“Conjoined Heads”

- Schweyer Type ”H;” Dickerson/Schulze Type “F”
- Designed listed as Thoet with Charles Troitin as engraver
- Diameters vary depending on the variety
- Orientation is medal alignment
- H1 or O1-R1 are 28mm and are very scarce to rare
 - The letters IRE on the reverse always show incomplete
 - Documented as delivered round 12 April 1871
- H2 or O2-R2 are 32mm, are exceedingly rare and 1 has never been seen
 - Indicated as struck over existing 2 penny coins
 - Documented as delivered round 20 May 1871
- H3 or O3-R3 are 30mm and are rare
 - Documented as delivered round 5 May 1873